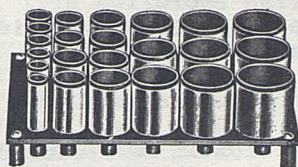


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LETTER TO A YOUNG POET: RIMBAUD IN ABYSSINIE

Sir:

I wish you to listen to me carefully. I shall write this only once.

I have nothing to do with poetry anymore, and I studiously avoid what you might call the muse, as I would any wearisome former love, and this one, I might add, was particularly feckless, noisy, malodorous and quite certainly dangerous.

Predictably, for all would-be poets are alike, your questions have an odd intensity to them. You remind me of a dog barking and nipping in his kennel, thinking he is about to be fed. I feel the impulse to beat you on the nose with a stick.

Let me assure you then, there is no "social significance to the art of poetry." None. And no I will not take your broken-hearted verses under my "wing." You would have to send me money first.

The books I read now are ledgers of fine, red-margined vellum. Gut-threaded and calf-covered. An entry:

"Item — mask, Somali; painted teak, design abstrait;
of priestly origins; sold.

Of these words, the greatest is sold.

Write to anyone else on earth but me. I will read none
of the poems you have sent me. Do yourself and the rest
of your world a favor: stop writing. Stop it.

Yours, etc.

A.R.

Hrar, Abyssinie
Juin, 1881

— Frederick J. Marchant

Belmont MA

THE MAN WITH THE HOE

I wondered of the race of mankind
I wondered of its beliefs
I wondered of its divinities
I wondered of its comedians
I wondered of its crowns
I wondered of its clowns
I wondered of its players
I wondered of its carnival
I wondered of its tyranny
I wondered of its tyrants
I wondered of its bondage
I wondered of its bullies
I wondered of its flights
I wondered of its futility

Again I wondered of the race of mankind
I wondered of a race of hands
I wondered of its paws
I wondered of its pawing the earth
I wondered of its tools
I wondered of its toolmakers
I wondered of its construction work
I wondered of its accomplishments
I wondered of its workingmen
I wondered of its acres
I wondered of its plows